

**A poetic approach
to documentary:
discomfort of form,
rhetorical strategies
and aesthetic experience**

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Certificate of original authorship

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of the requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Abstract

Working in the borderlands between art and document, a poetic approach to documentary disrupts commonsense understandings of what documentary can be. However, it is frequently viewed as marginal to the main body of documentary practice for its foregrounding of aesthetic choices around form and materiality.

Pushing to the extremes of what is recognisable as documentary, a poetic approach to documentary highlights the rhetorical impact of aesthetic choices within the broader field of practice. Experiential ways of knowing are emphasised so that the work is conceived of as an experience in itself rather than a replication of reality.

Moving beyond realist representations of evidence, a poetic approach can make use of techniques of defamiliarisation as a strategy to renew perception and enable a reimagining of preconceived connections. In diverging from established pathways unexpected combinations can occur, allowing complex and changeable conceptions to emerge.

Utilising a methodology of practice based research to produce a 28 minute single channel documentary and the close examination of pertinent creative works, this thesis argues that a critically engaged poetic approach to documentary can work to encourage thoughtful contemplation as part of an ongoing conversation in the process of knowing.